

Spoken text for the introductory video “Gender and Diversity at University”

Students and lecturers at German universities come from a wide range of personal backgrounds and lived experiences. When universities take this into account, everyone feels invited to bring their individuality to the table and to study, teach, or research without fear of discrimination.

Yet discrimination, both structural and individual, still happens. It arises when certain ideas about students are taken for granted. For example, that their parents support them financially, that they hold German passports, that they don't have children or, more broadly, that they are young, white, and heterosexual. The truth, however, is often very different. More than half of university students financially depend on working. This is particularly true for students from working-class families, older students, and students with international background. Some students have children or experience health challenges. Rigid guidelines can pose particular difficulties for these students.

The content and presentation of coursework do not always reflect the diversity of students' everyday lives. As such, courses fail to address all students, causing many of them to identify less with their chosen fields. Comments and language that reproduce stereotypes are also discriminatory and exclusionary. Racism, transphobia, and sexism can place extra burdens on students during lectures. Universities need diverse perspectives that question the familiar and promote critical academic debate. Ensuring high-quality teaching means recognizing the diverse realities under which students study as well as their differing learning needs. Employment, prolonged illness, and child care can be reconciled with study if flexible solutions are provided regarding attendance and exams. Education should be as accessible as possible.

A gender and diversity-conscious approach by lecturers helps reduce stereotypes and discrimination in education. It also ensures that curricula, teaching methods, and forms of communication have been thought through and can be refined. In turn, this strengthens students' motivation to learn and helps encourage their constructive contribution to academic discourse. Moreover, it cultivates universities into spaces for sharing ideas and developing change. Good teaching pays attention to gender and diversity. For universities that provide education and knowledge to all.

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